



NATIONAL CONSUMERS LEAGUE

1701 K Street, NW, Suite 1200, Washington, DC 20006

PHONE (202) 835-3323 FAX (202) 835-0747 www.nclnet.org

September 10, 2003

Board of Directors

Linda F. Golodner
President

Samuel A. Simon
Chair

Jane King
Vice Chair

Esther Shapiro
Vice Chair

Leland H. Swenson
Treasurer

Theodore R. Debro, Jr.
Secretary

Jack Blum
Counsel

Evelyn Dubrow
Honorary Chair

Erma Angevine
Honorary President

Judy Asazawa
Morton Bahr
Debra Berlyn
Alan Bosch
Delores Langford Bridgett
Jim Conran
Glenn English
Mary Finger
David J. Frederickson
Dorothy Garrick
Pastor Herrera, Jr.
Mary Heslin
Arlene Holt-Baker
Andrew J. Imperato
Ruth Jordan
Harry Kranz
Robert N. Mayer
Joyce D. Miller
Larry Mitchell
Brandolyn T. Clanton Pinkston
Cal Rapson
Alma Morales Riojas
Pedro Rodriguez
Patricia Royer
Chely Schaffer
Bert Seidman
Cleo Manuel Stamatou
Ricki Stochaj
Patricia Tyson
Gladys Gary Vaughn
Clinton Warne
Lora H. Weber
Frances West
Betsy Woodward

The Honorable Tom Lantos
U.S. House of Representatives
2217 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC 20515-0512

Dear Representative Lantos:

The National Consumers League (NCL) commends you for addressing critical child labor problems in your Youth Worker Protection Act. These problems can be corrected. The status quo cannot remain.

In the first two weeks of August, four young workers, all of them 16 years old, died on the job – one in roofing, one in a wrecking yard, and two in commercial agriculture.

Every 30 seconds, a young worker under the age of 18 is injured on the job. One teen dies due to workplace injury on average every five days. These statistics are not from a developing country. They reflect the reality of youth employment in the United States, based on statistics from the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health. Yet, the Hazardous Orders (HOs) found in the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) have not been comprehensively reviewed and updated since they were enacted in 1938. These HOs are our first line of defense in protecting youth from dangerous occupations, industries, and machinery that threaten their health and safety.

Research shows that students who work more than 20 hours a week demonstrate higher incidence of academic distress, alcohol and drug abuse, and autonomy from parents. Yet, in the United States, a student who is 16 years old and older can work unlimited hours per day or week, at any time of day or night during a school week. More U.S. teens are employed and work for longer hours during the school week than in any other affluent country – especially in those countries that are outperforming this country in academic scores.

In commercial agriculture, as many as 800,000 youth under the age of 18 are hired farmworkers, harvesting our nation's fruits and vegetables. Children of migrant and seasonal farmworkers are routinely exposed to dangerous pesticides and insecticides, hazardous equipment and tools, and work that stresses their developing bodies. These children may legally work as young as ten years old under the FLSA. Youth working in agriculture are less protected than youth working in non-agricultural occupations. They may perform hazardous work at 16 and may legally work at younger ages, for more hours, at any hour of the day or night (outside of school hours).

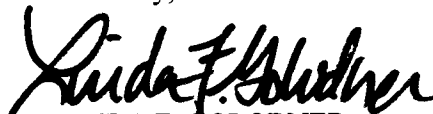
The Honorable Tom Lantos
September 10, 2003
page 2

No one questions that employment offers youth many benefits. NCL supports appropriate and safe youth employment. But, too much of youth work today is neither. The FLSA's child labor provisions are inadequate. It is critical that they be updated to reflect the realities of youth employment today, new technologies and hazards, and the educational competitiveness our youth and country need to maintain to succeed.

Founded in 1899, NCL is America's oldest national consumer advocacy organization. Its mission is to represent consumers in the marketplace and the workplace through investigation, education and advocacy. One of our first and continuing concerns is protecting working minors and ending child labor exploitation in the United States and abroad.

NCL is pleased to endorse this bill and is committed to employing our resources to promote the bill's passage at the earliest time. Again, thank you for your leadership on this important issue.

Sincerely,



LINDA F. GOLODNER
President